

Workshopping approaches to building improvement infrastructure across the P- 20 pipeline

UCEA- San Juan, Puerto Rico

Saturday, Nov 22, 2025 1:20 to 2:30pm,

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Kristen C. Wilcox PhD, University at Albany



Objective and Agenda

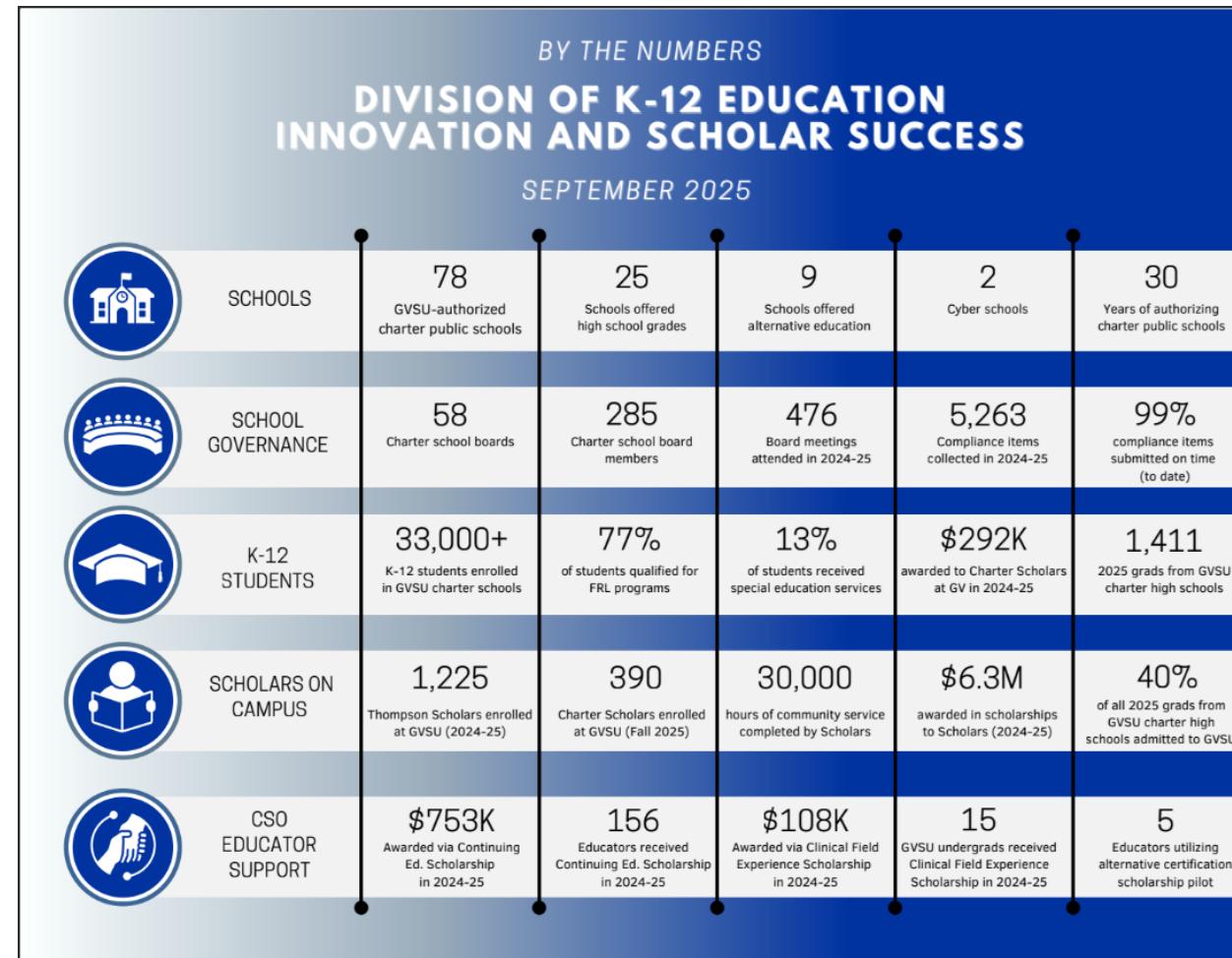
Objective: How to use continuous improvement (CI) processes and tools—specifically empathy and ecosystem maps- to support P-20 partnerships.

- Introducing P-20 equity issues
- Engaging with equity-focused problems of practice (POPs)
- Diving into continuous improvement processes and tools
- Sharing and reflecting on learning

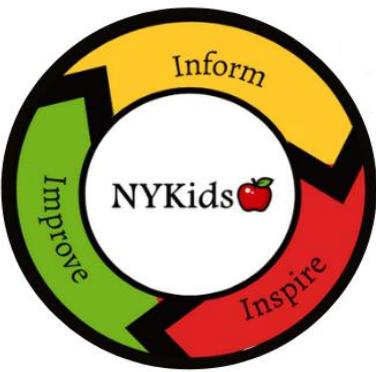
Who we are: Matt



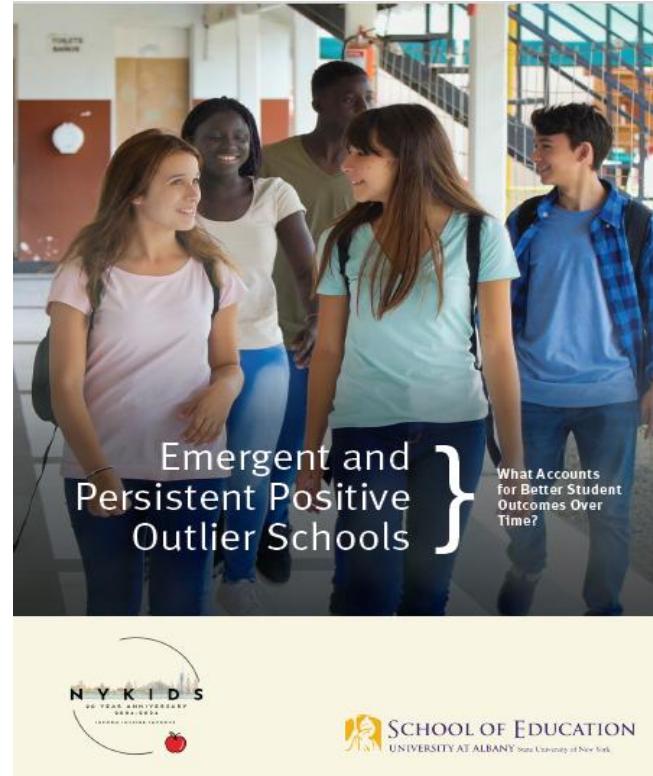
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Who we are: Kristen



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Equity Issues across P-20

❖ Challenges in Collaboration

❖ Improvement Research in Education (IRE)

❖ Participatory Engagement

❖ Collaboration Benefits

❖ Power Relations and Expertise

❖ Equity Champions

Improvement Science and Problems of Practice

Problem of Practice:
a persistent, and specific problem
experienced by practicing
professional educators, the
addressing of which has the potential
to result in improved understanding,
experience, and outcomes.

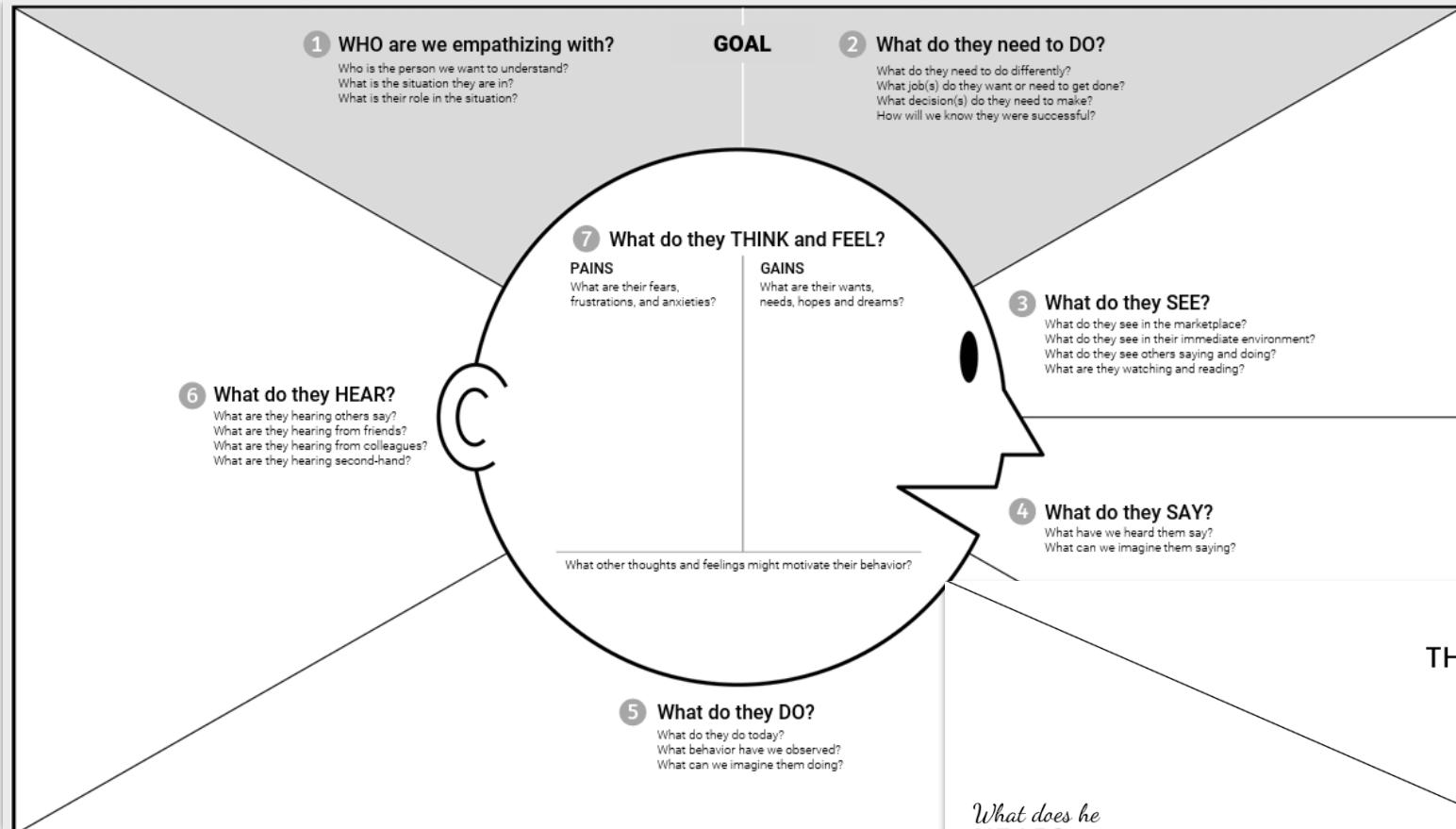




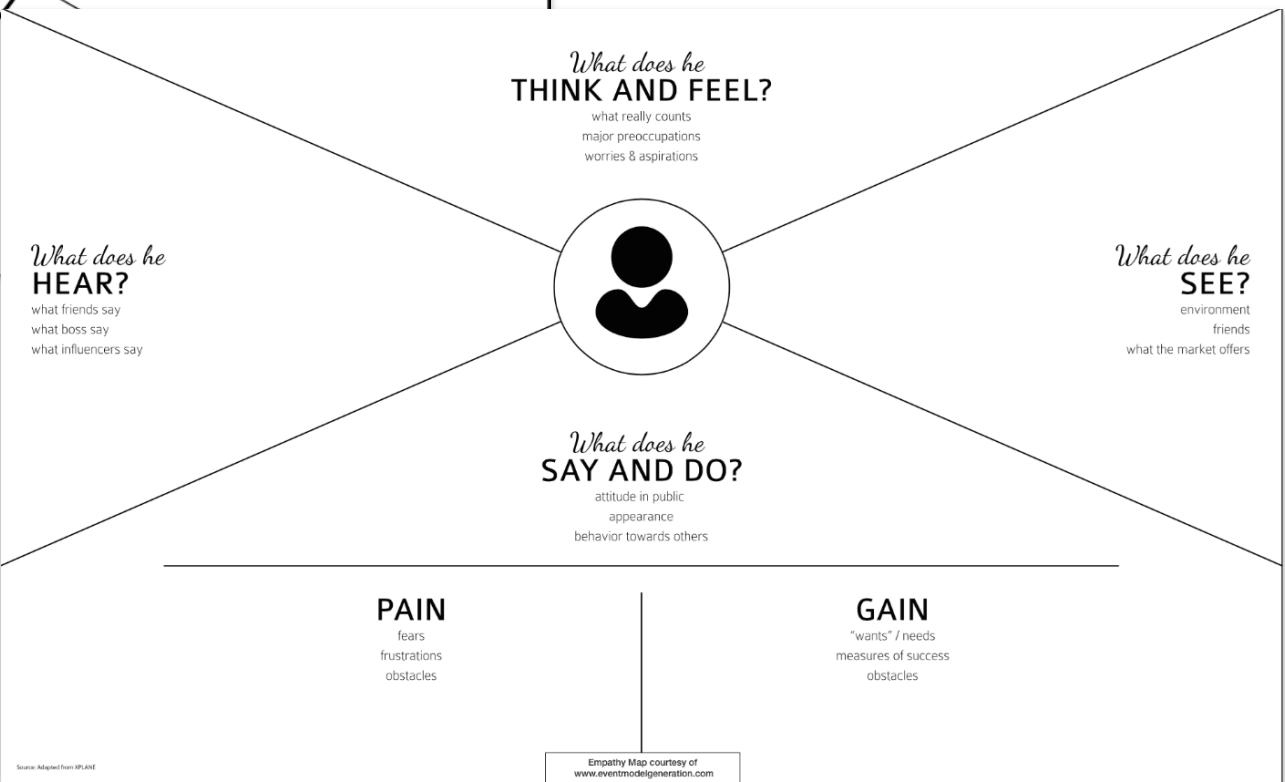
Empathy Mapping

Step 1: Individual note-taking

- 1) What are some equity-focused problems of practice you have encountered or been focused on recently?
- 2) What have you done to address or study these problems of practice?
- 3) What challenges have you encountered in addressing or studying these problems of practice?



Empathy maps come in different shapes and sizes!





Using Empathy Mapping

Step 2: Identify at least one person with a different color post it note (P12 or HE).

Step 3: Now with your “other color” post-it note partner - engage in using the empathy map protocol taking turns with P12 or HE leading questions. Use the empathy map tool and allow 5 minutes each.

1. Please tell me about how you responded to the questions.
2. What thoughts or feelings come to mind in relation to your responses to the questions (ie. “pains and gains”)?
3. How might collaborating with a P-12 (if HE) or HE (if P-12) partner might support you in addressing or studying this problem of practice?

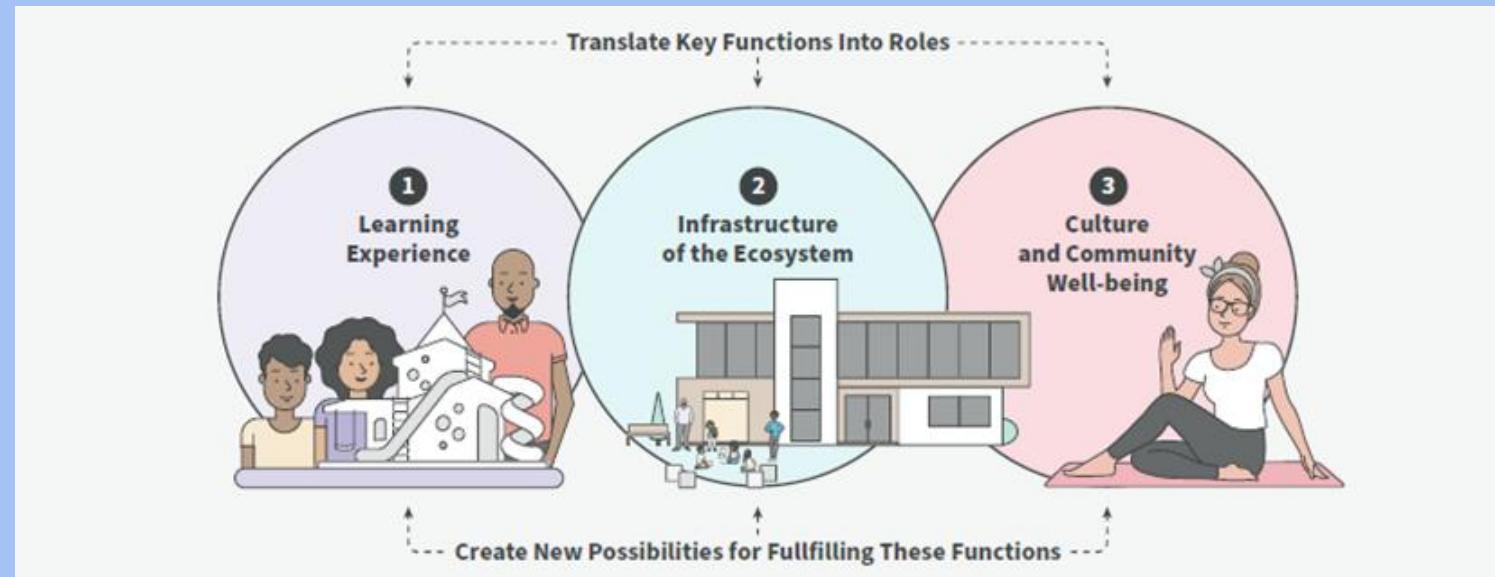
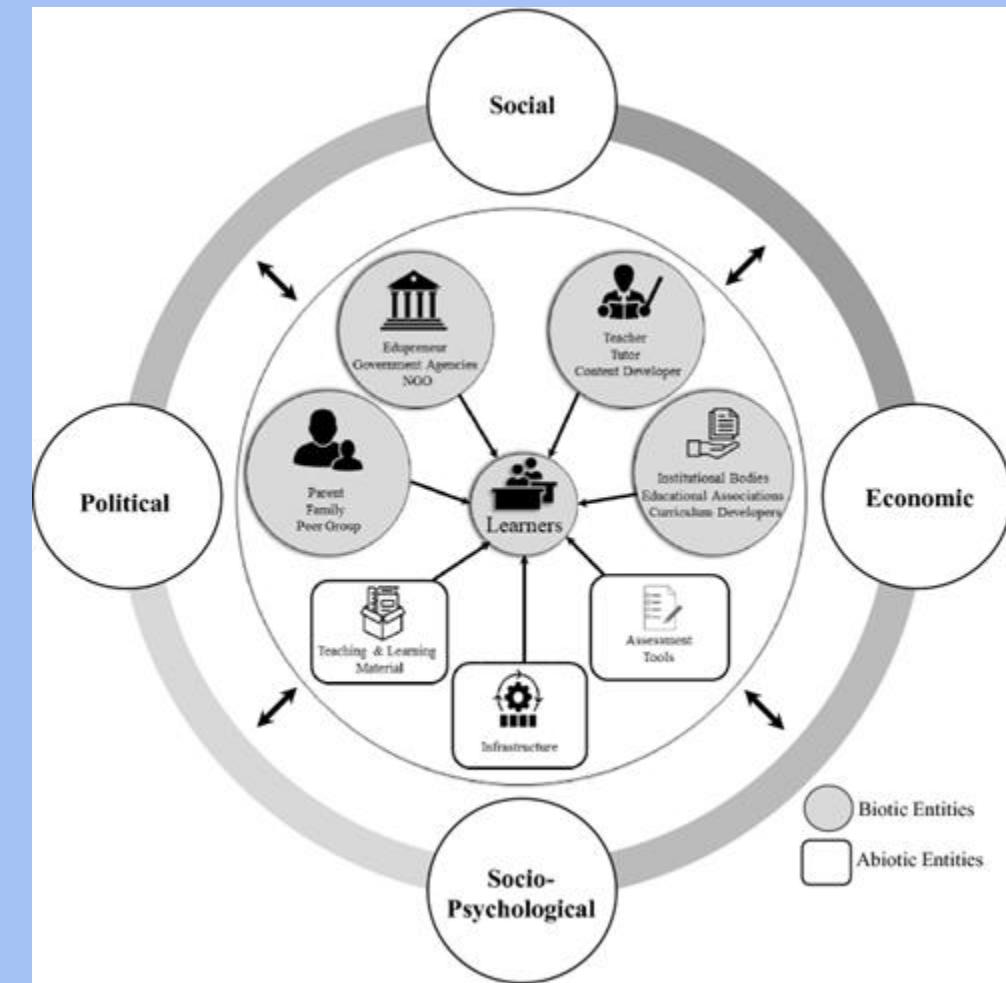


Debrief on Empathy Mapping

- What did you discover as you engaged in using this protocol about how your P-12 or HE peer is addressing or studying problems of practice?
- What do you see as the benefits of using such a protocol with those with whom you collaborate?
- What did you learn about how P-12 and HE improvers might help each other address challenges in addressing and studying problems of practice?



Ecosystem Mapping



- Modern Educational Ecosystem (Bandyopadhyay, S. et al (2021))
- Domains and Key Functions of Thriving Ecosystems (Martinez Calvit, Education Reimagined (2023))

Ecosystem Mapping Worksheet



Phase 1: Identifying the Actors

Map the key stakeholders and entities in your ecosystem

- Who are the individuals, organizations, groups, and institutions involved in or affected by this issue?
 - Consider These Categories:
 - Students, families, and community members
 - P-12 schools, districts, and educational organizations
 - Higher education institutions and personnel
 - Community-based organizations and nonprofits
 - Government agencies and policymakers
 - Businesses and workforce partners
 - Informal networks and grassroots groups

Phase 2: Identifying Relationships

Understand how
actors currently
interact and connect

- What are the existing relationships, interactions, and flows between the actors you identified?
- Types of Relationships to Explore:
 - Formal partnerships and collaborations
 - Resource flows (funding, materials, expertise)
 - Information and communication pathways
 - Power dynamics and decision-making authority
 - Historical relationships and trust levels
 - Gaps, conflicts, or tensions between actors
 - Redundancies or overlapping efforts

Phase 3: Developing Connections

Identify opportunities
for new partnerships
and actions

- What new or strengthened connections could create opportunities for greater impact and equity?
 - Questions to Guide Your Thinking:
 - Which actors should be connected but currently aren't?
 - What leverage points could amplify positive change?
 - How can power dynamics be more equitably distributed?
 - What resources or expertise could be better shared?
 - Which community voices need to be centered?
 - What quick wins could build momentum?
 - What systemic barriers need to be addressed?

Phase 4: Ecosystem Mapping

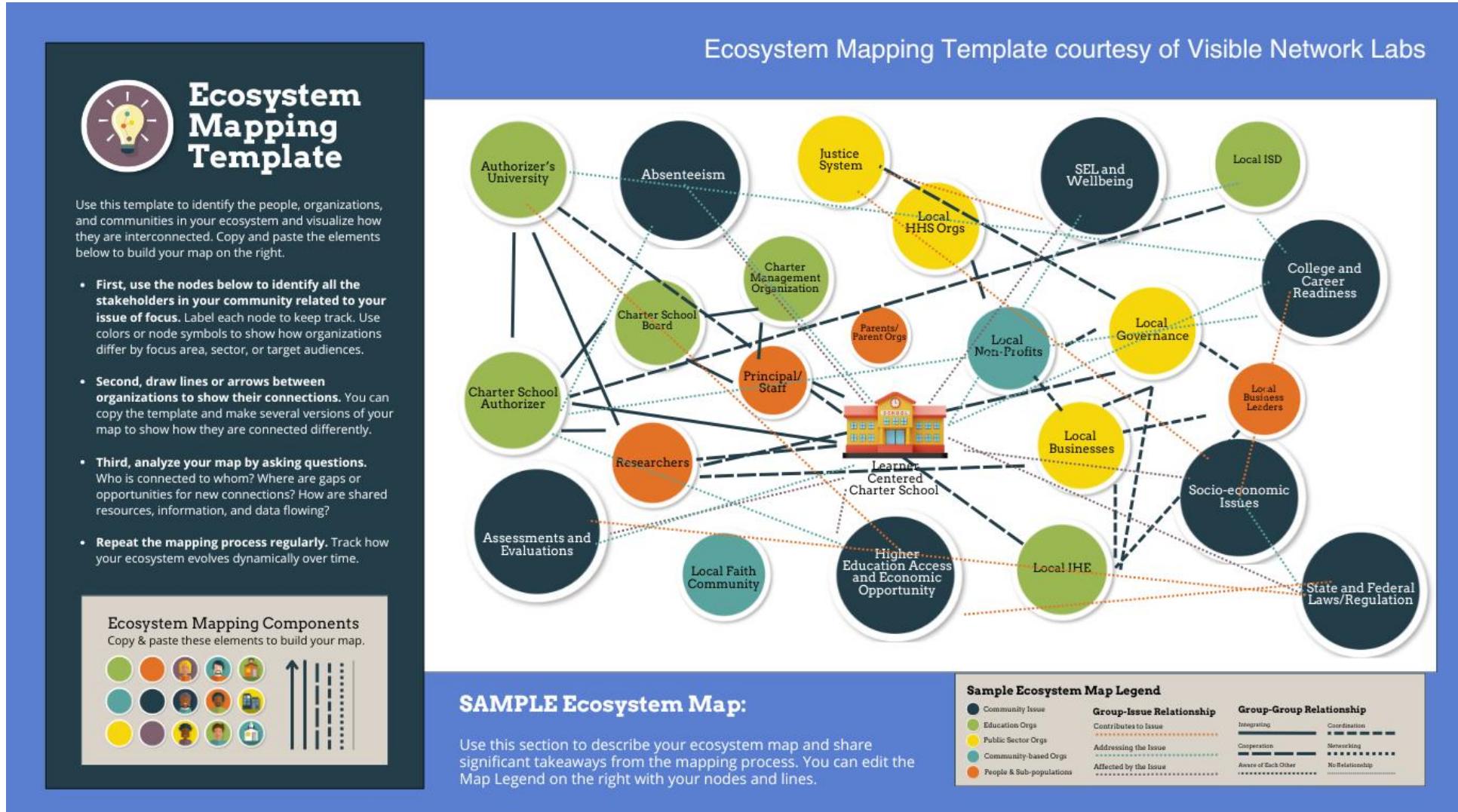
Use this template to identify the people, organizations, and communities in your ecosystem and visualize how they are interconnected. Copy and paste the elements below to build your map on the right.

- **First, use the nodes to identify all the stakeholders in your community related to your issue of focus.** Label each node to keep track. Use colors or node symbols to show how organizations differ by focus area, sector, or target audiences.
- **Second, draw lines or arrows between organizations to show their connections.** You can copy the template and make several versions of your map to show how they are connected differently.
- **Third, analyze your map by asking questions.** Who is connected to whom? Where are gaps or opportunities for new connections? How are shared resources, information, and data flowing?
- **Repeat the mapping process regularly.** Track how your ecosystem evolves dynamically over time.



Scan me

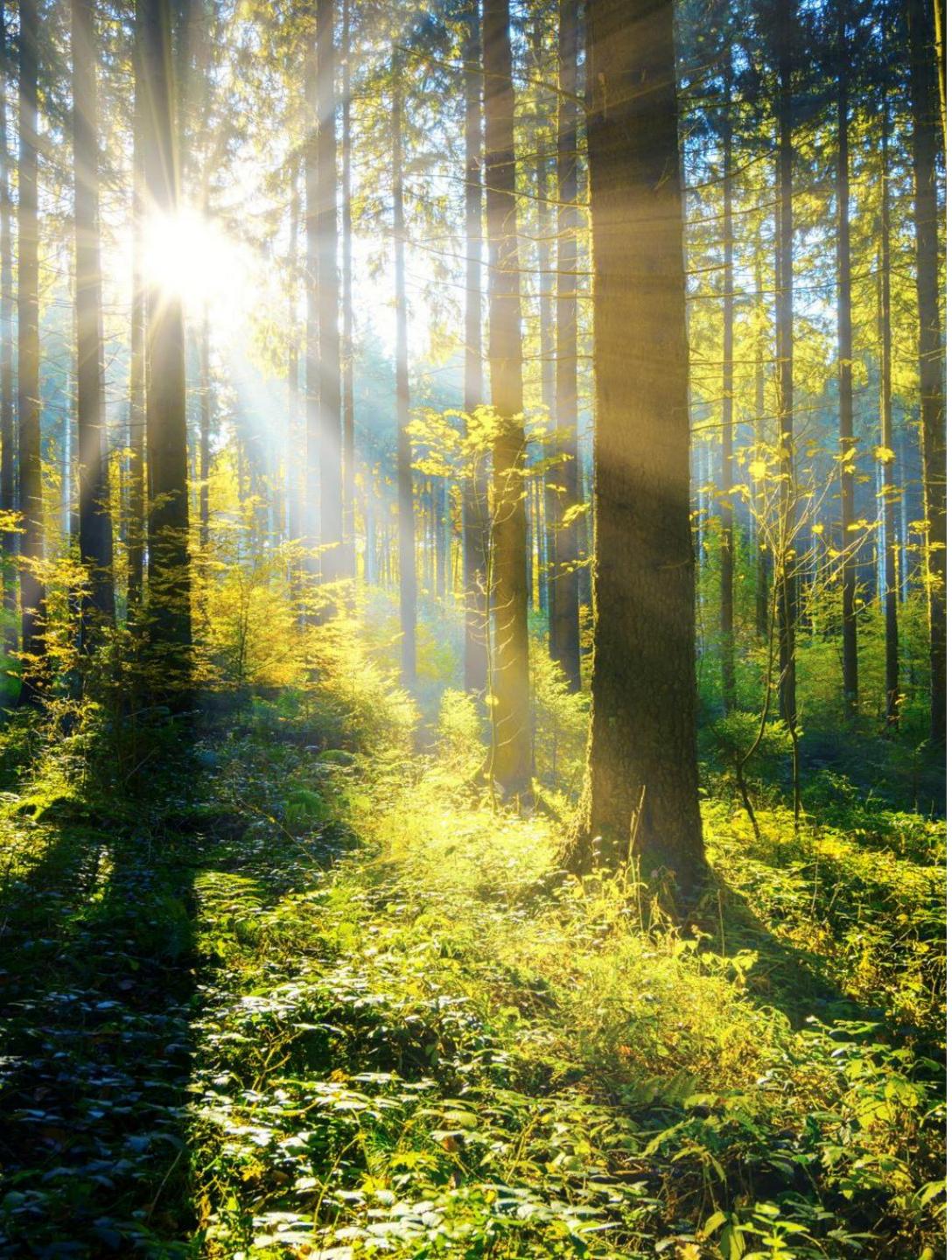
Sample Ecosystem Map: Charter School





Diving into CI protocols and tools: Ecosystem Mapping

- Ecosystem mapping involves creating a map of the interconnections between all the people, organizations, ideas, and other factors that impact your problem.
 - It can help you understand the interactions between different issues and sectors to find new opportunities for action and impact.
-



Lessons Learned

Matt's Key Lessons Learned

- COVET (Communication, Openness, Vulnerability, Experience, and Trust)
- See both the forest and the trees (human experience within systems that we live and work in)

Kristen's Key Lessons Learned

- Anchor partnership work in IS principles (like being user-centered and problem-focused)
- Anchor research into strategic planning and measurement systems with P-12 partners
- Invite diverse array of professionals in the school/university/other organizations into continuous improvement teams

Concluding Remarks

- **Addressing diversity and inclusivity in educational systems requires moving beyond isolated interventions** to embrace practical innovations that leverage P-20 boundary-crossing collaboration, as called for in the 2025 SESI framework for democratic educational transformation.
- **Higher education access equity cannot be resolved through institution-specific reforms alone**; the evidence demonstrates that system-level approaches coordinating P-20 stakeholders are necessary to achieve the transformational change that research and practice demand.
- **Continuous improvement methodologies grounded in collaborative P-20 practice offer a viable pathway** for advancing educational equity systemically, warranting further investigation and adaptation across diverse institutional and community contexts.



What's next

Please keep in touch!

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